

Dear Senate Health Committee,

Tomorrow there will be a hearing regarding the SB 414, 415, and 981. I urge all committee members to support the bills. As a mother of two ASD children, I do want to encourage you to support the autism bill to cover autism treatments. There are many legislators who are in fact, sympathetic to the autism community, but say they can't support mandates.

In a way, society imposes all kinds of mandates, fixed costs that must be paid in a sense, that we do not and can not avoid as responsible citizens. We pay to educate our children and that's a mandate in a sense, we take care of our sick and disabled, and that's a mandate in a similar sense. Maybe not in the insurer's mind's eye of what a mandate is, but it's a fixed cost, and these costs, for families, for school districts and for the state are much higher if you don't educate or care for children properly, and those increased expenses last a lifetime. This is also a drag on our economy.

The actual cost increase is very small, and the savings to the state would be quite significant. Without efficacious and early treatment, these costs are shouldered by the individual's family, the school district and ultimately the state, as many more children will need lifelong custodial care without effective intervention. The Governor has graciously been working out ways to make this easier for the business community. The Governor is very pro business and has been very good to the business community during his term, and likely will continue to remain so. Standing on principle needs to be viewed pragmatically. Much more money will be spent, unfortunately, for the hollow victory of drawing the line in the sand and maintaining a person is being anti mandate in a world full of children and obligations.

I believe SB 981 is an excellent use of taxpayer dollars to alleviate the initial financial implications for businesses, who, under our current system of funding insurance take the first financial bump, albeit very small. This bill enables finally true assist systematically to occur in the state of Michigan for dealing with the autism tsunami.

It is time for something far more substantial to occur to help with this devastating situation. Every year, there are more and more children diagnosed with autism, with no cause or cure known at this point. Michigan is one of the ten worst states in the country in regards services and management of the wave of autism. Please help reverse this fact, support the autism community, your local school districts, and the state to manage this serious public health crisis. It's been too hard for too long. We have strong supporters in key powerful positions who are exercising their political will and capital to help push this legislation through, we have tremendous need, and now we have bills pending that can make a huge difference in many lives, and save enormous money in the long term. The time for your support has never been more crucial.

Sincerely,

Maria Huffman PA-C